

# **MAINE ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION**

## **Exposure to Exhaust Fumes by Students and Employees**

### **BACKGROUND**

Two recent studies have precipitated the need for all school bus operators to rethink the manner in which school buses are currently being operated. As spokespersons for the industry in Maine, and in keeping with our mission to promote pupil transportation safety and services by continually working to upgrade vehicle standards, improve communication and provide meaningful training for all involved in pupil transportation it is incumbent on this organization to understand the issues and offer a collective voice in response to the studies.

The Maine Association for Pupil Transportation recognizes the need for continued research into all aspects of student transportation. We encourage members to become knowledgeable and current with the most recent research and studies concerning our industry.

With the over-riding objective being to reduce and limit exposure of our children and employees to exhaust fumes, it is our responsibility to provide data and recommendations to superintendents, business managers, and school boards. They will ultimately decide the district's course of action.

### **MAPT POSITION**

Scientifically compiled environmental and health data clearly demonstrates that exposure to exhaust fumes inside the school bus presents a potential health risk to children. In response to this information, we have formulated the following recommendations for schools administrators to consider:

#### **1. PROHIBIT OR REDUCE BUS IDLING**

Limit the idling time during start-up to what is recommended by the manufacturer. Block heaters can help warm-up the engine to avoid starting difficulties and shorten warm-up time. Buses should be turned off and not restarted until ready to depart loading and unloading zones. This applies to daily pickup as well as activity, sports and charter trips. \*If your current buses need the engine running to operate the flashing lights, the circuit configurations can be changed so that the battery can power the lights without the engine running.

#### **2. REQUIRE ROUTINE MAINTENANCE**

All buses should be on a routine maintenance schedule. Particular attention should be given to exhaust systems, engine compartment seals, firewall integrity and window seal and engine filters and tuning. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection will do emissions testing at no cost to school districts. Contact Lynne Cayting at the DEP, 207-287-7599 for more information.

#### **3. EXAMINE THE LENGTH OF RIDES & TAKE APPROPRIATE STEPS**

When scheduling, district should review length of routes and minimize wherever possible. Districts should review bus replacement practices and consider bus age when scheduling and routing.

#### **4. RECONSIDER LOCATION OF BUS PARKING LOTS**

Districts should review the bus storage/parking area. Taking into consideration the proximity to schools or other populated areas. Procedures should be developed to minimize warm-up time regardless of location.

#### **5. ADJUST CONTRACT PROVISIONS TO PROVIDE VEHICLES THAT MINIMIZE PARTICULATE EMISSIONS AND THAT USE LOW POLLUTING FUELS**

Districts contracting for or purchasing buses should require low emissions and the best available technology. Districts should be purchasing the lowest sulfur diesel fuel in their area.

We recognize that many of these recommendations are current practice for most transportation providers. We further recognize that many of these issues may impact district budgets. However, we believe that these recommendations provide a common sense approach to protecting children and employees from the potential hazards of school bus exhaust fumes.